CHAPTER 1

The opening

This is a Maki-Madani chapter. It contains seven verses, 27 words and 140 letters.

Allah, in the name of the most affectionate, the merciful

“Allah, in the name of the most affectionate, the merciful”—“بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ”– written at the start of every chapter is a complete verse (revealed for separation between two chapters) and that in Chapter 27, The Ant, is a part of (30th) verse. Remember, Bismillah was not revealed before every chapter. Rather, it was revealed once and then repeatedly written before every chapter to differentiate between them. Thus, Bismillah is written distinctively before every chapter, not mixed with the verses. Moreover, imam does not recite Bismillah out loud in loud prayers. Also, the first revelation that Sayyiduna Jabriel علیہ السلام brought was “Recite with the name of your Lord Who created” (96:1)—“ٱقْرَأْ بِٱسْمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ”—it did not contain Bismillah. In Taraweeh, Hafiz Imam should recite Bismillah out loud before a chapter. It turns out that Bismillah should be recited before doing any good work. When Sayyiduna Sulaymaan علیہ السلام wrote to Bilqees, he first wrote Bismillah in the letter; for this, he was blessed with Yemen and its queen. Our Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم started the Treaty of Hudaybiya with Bismillah; for this, he was blessed with the victory of Madina. However, when slaughtering an animal, just recite “بِسْمِ اللهِ اَللهُ أَكْبَرُ”, because it is not allowed to mention mercy of Allah on occasion of wrath. That’s why the Holy Prophet’s name is not mentioned when slaughtering.

1. All praise unto Allah, Lord of all the worlds:

The letter "ب" ("b") at the start of Bismillah means "with the help of" and the verb ("start") before it is hidden; it means "Start I with the help of Allah's name". It turns out that seeking help from other than Allah, too, is allowed—then from Allah's prophet and His pious persons is also allowed—for they, too, like the name of Allah, represent and guide to Allah. That's why the Quran declared Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِه وَسَلَّم to be remembrance of Allah. Considering "ٱلۡ" in "ٱلۡحَمۡدُ" to refer to all- inclusiveness, then the meaning is as the Quran's translator رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ translated ("all praise unto Allah"): all praises, direct or indirect, are Allah's praise because a person's praise is, in fact, his creator's praise. Considering "ٱلۡ" in "ٱلۡحَمۡدُ" to refer to definiteness, then the meaning is ("the praise unto Allah"): the praise according to only Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِه وَسَلَّم is acceptable. Thus, the polytheists' and infidels' praise, whatever, to God is not acceptable because that is not according to the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِه وَسَلَّم (Rooh ul Bayan).

2. The most affectionate, the merciful.

It turns out that although God is the creator and owner of everything but He should be referred to noble creation. Thus, it should not be said, "O, the Lord of Abu Jahl", but rather, "O, the Lord of Muhammad the Prophet of Allah".

3. Master of the Day of Requital (Judgement).

By using "we" ("نَعۡبُدُ"), it turns out that prayers should be offered in congregation—if accepted from one, will be accepted from all.

4. We worship You alone and beg You alone for help.

It turns out that the actual help like the actual praise, direct or indirect, is from Allah. Remember, worship is for Allah only; seeking help is actually from Allah, figuratively from His creation. For this difference, two separate phrases were used to say the two things (worship and help). Remember, the difference between worshipping and seeking help: Help can be figuratively sought from other than Allah—Allah says, "Only Allah is your friend and His Messenger" (5:55), "And help each other in righteousness and piety" (5:2)—but

worship cannot be offered to anyone other than Allah, neither actually nor figuratively, for worship means to take an object as the creator or the like of creator and according devotion or obedience to it. Worship for other than God is polytheism; if, like worship, seeking help from other than Allah were polytheism, this verse would have been like this, "We worship and beg for help You alone". Moreover remember, to seek help in worldly or spiritual matters by having any recourse is, in fact, seeking help from Allah. A patient's seeing the doctor, an oppressed's plea to the in-authority, a sinner's request to the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم are not contrary to this verse, like praising someone is not contrary to the all- inclusiveness of "All praise unto Allah" for that praise is, in fact, an indirect praise of Allah. Also remember, the pious help even after their death. On the Night of Ascension, Sayyiduna Moosa علیہ السلام got 50 prayers made five; even today, an unbeliever becomes a Muslim by saying the blessed name of the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالٰى عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم. Thus, seeking help from the pious after their death is not contrary to this verse.

5. Guide us in the straight path:

6. the path of those whom You have favoured

7. not of those who have earned Your anger and nor of those who have gone astray.

It turns out three points. First, the best of all the favours of Allah is the guide to straight path, in that in all sections of prayers, it was made imperative to recite it. Second, the indication of the straight path is that saints and pious would follow it, for they are the ones whom Allah has favoured, Allah says, "be with the truthful" (9:19). And that is the Ahle Sunnat only, in that all the saints came from it and do now. Third, the guidance cannot be sought only on one's own but is through God's favour. [To be continued...]